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VI. *A Letter wherein is given an Account of the Catalogues of Manuscripts lately Printed at Oxford.*

S I R,

According to your Desire, I will procure you one of the Catalogues of Manuscripts, which is prized by the Delegates of our Press, at One Pound Two Shillings. By my readiness in this little Affair, I would that you should guess how much I am devoted to your Service; and as another Instance of an entire Obedience to all that you require, I have here sent you my Judgment of the Work it self, which (without any Complement) none but ——— should have forced from me.

I know my own Inabilities too well, to be forward in meddling with any thing out of my way and above my reach: yet when ——— tells me, with his usual Sweetness, *That he would willingly be oblig'd to me for my Opinion of the Book, of the Value and Use whereof he desires to be inform'd, in order to make a right Estimation of it.* I at length prevail'd with my self, for a time, to put a stop to those Studies I was engaged in, and which, I must needs say, were more agreeable to my Inclination; and have perus'd not only this, but several other Catalogues of Manuscripts, my Thoughts upon all which, I present you with: Not that I am so vain as to suppose the Character of this present Catalogue now before me, will rise or sink for any thing I can say; but that I might convince ——— that all his Desires, with me, have the Place of Commands.

But

But in order to make such a Judgment, it will not be amiss to turn over this Catalogue a little, enquiring whether the Books themselves are of such Value as to countervail so much Trouble and Charge; and in the next place, whether the Descriptions we here find, do represent them fairly and give us a fitting Notion of them or not.

The Catalogue consists (as you will find) of Two Tomes: The First of which takes in the Manuscripts in the *Bodleian*, *Savilian* and *Ashmolean* Libraries, which belong to the University in general, in Part I. and the Manuscripts in most of our College-Libraries in Part II. with those of the Libraries of the University of *Cambridge* in Part III. The Second Tome gives in Part I. Catalogues of the Manuscripts in the Libraries of many of the Cathedral Churches, and of several of the Nobility and Gentry: and in Part II. are some Catalogues of the Manuscripts in some Libraries of *Ireland*: each of which several Parts has its peculiar Index. I don't here insist upon Dr. *Smith's* Catalogue of the *Cotton* Library, which though it be printed in the same Paper with this, and may be bound up together with it; yet it was publish'd some time since, continues to be sold distinctly by it self, and, as I conceive, was not intended by your Letter.

At the beginning of the Book is prefix'd an Epistle concerning the Nature and Use of it (to which I might well refer you, without giving you, or my self any further Trouble) which is followed by a Preface which endeavours to excuse some Faults which nice People find in some of the Catalogues; and acquaints us with the Method which was taken in composing the Indexes, with a List of all the Catalogues comprehended in the whole. Then comes the Life of Sir *Thomas Bodley*, the Magni-

Recent Founder of our Publick Library, with the History of it, and an Account of its chief Benefactors, the Heads of whom are engraven on Copper Plates, here, and at the Front of the Book to be seen.

The first Catalogue is that of those Greek Manuscripts which once belong'd to *Signior Francesco Baroccio a Venetian Gentleman*, which were highly valued in *Italy*, and by a singular Providence brought over into *England*, and by the Persuasions of *Archbishop Laud*, were bought by the old Earl of *Pembroke*, and presented to our University. These Books have been oftentimes celebrated by many Authors of Note, unto whom they have been highly Serviceable : And what Reputation they were in at the beginning, you may read in *Archbishop Usher's* Letters, pag. 400. where you have that most learned Primate's Opinion of them, and pag. 406. where, says Sir *Henry Bourgbier* (who was afterwards Earl of *Bath*) *Dr. Lindsell, now Dean of Lichfield, tells me, that it (the Parcel of Barocian Manuscripts) is a great Treasure, far exceeding the Catalogue; that there are a great number of excellent Tracts of the Greek Fathers, never yet published; besides divers ancient Historians and Geographers; and particularly that there is as much of Chrylostom, as will make a Volume equal to any of these publish'd by Sir Henry Savil.* And indeed, they have been constantly esteemed as the most noble Parcel of Greek Books, that were ever yet repos'd in any *English Library*.

The Manuscripts of Sir *Thomas Roe*, which he brought over with him from the East; and those given by *Oliver Cromwell* have as good a Character, considering their Numbers: Those of *Cromwell's* being accounted as the remaining part of the *Barocian Library*; for some think that the Earl did not give the whole, but that he thought fit to detain those which were afterwards given by *Cromwell*.

After

After these, comes a Catalogue of the Manuscripts of Archbishop *Laud*, in Number One Thousand Three Hundred, which he gave the University at Three or Four Donations, besides what he gave to *St. John's College* in *Oxon*, and what he further intended us, had he not been prevented by the Iniquity of those times. The Manuscripts (as Dr. *Langbain* us'd to say) are sufficient to make a large Library of themselves, and are written in these Languages, viz. *Hebrew*, *Syriac*, *Chaldee*, *Æthiopic*, *Armenian*, *Arabic* (as well *African* as *Asiatic*) *Persian*, *Turkish*, *Chinese*, *Japanese*, *Malayan*, *Malabaric*, *Russian*, *Greek* (as well in the *Vulgar Greek* as the *Scholastic*) *Latin*, *Italian*, *German*, *Bohemian*, *Irish*, *Anglo-Saxon*, *English*, and one Book there is of the *Hieroglyphicks of Mexico*, as there are several others in other parts of the Library. What immense Charges must we think this Prelate was put to, to send Messengers on purpose, to almost all parts of the World, and there to buy up so many of their choicest Monuments? What noble Copies do we find here of the sacred Books, Fathers, Historians, Poets, Orators, Philosophers, Physitians, Mathematicians, and what not? This great Variety of Languages made me ask the Library-Keepers what other Languages they had Manuscripts of in the Library, which were not enumerated among those given by Archbishop *Laud*? They replied that there were Thousands of Manuscripts which were in the same Languages with that Prelates Books; besides which, they shewed me Books written in the *Samaritan*, *Mendæan*, *Coptic* or *Ægyptian* *Siamese*, *Peguan*, *Indostan*, *Sanscreeet*, *Tylingan*, *Ceylonian*, *Tartarian*, *Spanish*, *Portuguese*, *British*, *Francic*, *Frisian*, *Gothic*, and *Islandic*; they added farther, that besides these, they knew not but some might be forgotten.

After these, follow the Manuscripts of Sir *Kenelm Digby*, which are chiefly *Mathematical*, though there be many other valuable Books among them on other Subjects. They are almost all of them uniformly bound up, with his Coat stamp'd on the Covers, as the better part of Archbishop *Laud's* are likewise.

Then comes a great Number of other Manuscripts, given by very many particular Persons, and now inscrib'd to Sir *Thomas Bodley*, the promising Titles of which, you may very agreeably entertain your self with, till you come to

The Manuscripts of Mr. *John Selden*, that is his Manuscripts in the Greek and Oriental Languages, with some others of his Ancient Books: For I have been told, that the University never received his *Law Manuscripts*, nor his *Leiger* and other Books concerning the *English Monasteries*.

Next to these, come in order the Books which are said to be in *Hyperoo Bodleiano*; the chief Parcels whereof are these: 1. Those given by Dr. *Huntington*. 2. Those bought by the University of Mr. *Greaves*. 3. The Collections of Dr. *Richard James*, bought by the University after his Death, which are more particularly accounted for afterwards. 4. Those given by the Lord *Fairfax*, amongst which are the Collections of Mr. *Dodsworth*, of which more anon. And 5. Those bought by the University out of the Library of the Lord *Hatton*, amongst all which, are many Books of very great Value.

As for Mr. *Dodsworth's* Collections, they make One Hundred and Sixty Volumes, written with his own Hand, and they contain a vast Treasure of Antiquities of all sorts, relating to our *English* History, and are continually used by the Lovers of it. These Books are the most prodigious Specimen of a single Person's unwearied Industry,  
that

that I ever yet saw ; and it almost amazes and shames me, when I reflect upon so many Books written by the Hand of one Man, most of them in *Folio*, and the rest in *Quarto* : And at the same time, I can't but have a Veneration for his Memory, since all this Pains was taken in the midst of Discouragements ; and for that he continued to his Life's end in amassing and heaping up together such Memoirs and Notices of things, as otherwise we should have been, for the most part, utterly ignorant of. Next to these, in the Catalogue, follows a more exact Account of

The Collections of Mr. *John Leland*, written all with his own Hand, who was as indefatigable as Mr. *Dodsworth*, and so continued whilst he was himself. His Design in these Collections, and others which are lost, or existent in other Places, was to set our *England* in its true Light, as may more largely appear by his *New-Years-Gift* to King *Henry VIII.* which I remember to have formerly read in Mr. *Weaver's Funeral Monuments*. But though neither Mr. *Leland* nor Mr. *Dodsworth* lived to digest their Collections, yet they have been and still are earnestly enquired after, and diligently perus'd by those that cultivate the History of *England* ; though some have been so disingenuous as to conceal the Names of these Men, to whom they have been indebted for many a fair Remark.

The next Parcel of Books are those of an equally industrious Foreigner, the late learned Mr. *Francis Junius*, the chief Promoter of the *Saxon* Learning whilst he lived, as the Reverend Dr. *Hickes* is now. These Books Mr. *Junius* bequeathed to the University at his Death, all of them appertaining to the *Septentrional* Languages. Some of these are the old Manuscripts themselves, others are Copies of the most considerable *Saxon* Manuscripts in the *Cotton Library*, &c. accurately transcrib'd by himself ;

or

or else his own Works, almost ready for the Press; or lastly, some curious printed Books, with his written Notes and Amendments.

Then follow the Papers of *Isaac Casaubon*, the *Adversaria* of Dr. *Langbain*, late Provost of *Queens-College, Oxon*, both in their own Hands. And afterwards a Catalogue of part of the Manuscripts bequeathed to the University by Dr. *Mareschal*, late Rector of *Lincoln-College*, the remaining part of them being described pag. 373.

Now comes the Titles of the Oriental Manuscripts of the learned Dr. *Pocock*, late Regius Professor of *Hebrew* in this University, which the University bought of his Widow. And a Catalogue of the Manuscripts of Dr. *Huntington*, which the University bought of him since his Return from the East. As also those Books which the University bought of Dr. *Hyde*: Which Three Parcels containing in them many Books of an extraordinary Price and Value, join'd to what was in the Library before, and has come in since, furnish any Scholar with sufficient Helps to pursue his own Studies in most of their Languages. For my own part, Sir, I confess, I am not skill'd this Way; nor will my necessary Affairs permit me to lay out such a Portion of my Time amidst these Books, as I might do, were my Circumstances otherwise than they are. But those who live more easily, and have Leisure, if they so pleas'd, might soon find Authors suitable to their own Genius, which they might Study with great Advantage. For if the *Old Testament* be fit to be read in the Original, and in those Tongues that approach nearest to the Original, and those Sages who from time to time have taken pains to illustrate it: If *Euclid*, *Aristotle*, *Hero*, *Apollonius Pergæus*, and others of the Ancients, part of whose Writings still remain to us translated into *Arabic*, though the Original *Greek* be lost; if these, I say, shall be accounted worthy to be read and publish-



published : If the Works of *St. Ephraim Syrus*, and many other Fathers and Ecclesiastical Writers, who are still locked up in the Eastern Languages, shall be thought useful to Divines : In a Word, if the *Philosophy, Poetry, Pharmacy, Laws, Religion, History, Policy, Mathematicks, Mechanicks*, or any other part of useful Learning, which has flourish'd so long in the *East*, may be thought worth enquiring into ; then, I think, these Books ought to be consulted. Nor is the Way to them so difficult as some may imagine, since there is so great Plenty among them of excellent *Grammarians* and *Lexicographers*, and divers Books already to be had, which are printed with a *Latin* Version, and most of the Manuscripts are written better than they can be printed, and some with the utmost exactness, and with Pictures in glorious Colours, which illustrate and adorn their Books, as Prints do ours. I beg your Pardon, Sir, for this Digression, which I could not well forbear, in regard the *Oriental* Learning is not much cried up here, and because it has been my good Fortune to see many of these Books in Libraries, which seem to promise so much, and (I had almost said) are regarded so little.

After these, we have an Account of the Manuscripts which *Dr. Barlow*, the late Lord Bishop of *Lincoln*, bequeathed by Will to the Library ; which is followed by the Particulars of the Manuscripts left by *Sir William Dugdale* to the *Ashmolean Museum*, mostly written with his own Hand.

These are followed with a Catalogue of the Manuscripts given by *Sir Henry Savil* ; an Account of some Mathematical Instruments belonging to the *Geometry* School, and a Catalogue of the printed Books there, being all Mathematical, which Catalogue was never before made Publick.

Then comes a Catalogue of the Manuscripts, in the *Ashmolean Library*, which are ranged under the following Heads, as, *Grammatici, Rhetorici, Musici, Geometræ, Astrologici, Poemata, de Re Antiquaria, de Re Heraldica, Historici, Vita, Historiæ Naturalis, Chimici, Medici, Anatomici, Chirurgici, Juridici, Politici, Orationes, Geographici, Theologici, Magici, Prophetici, Fatidici, Miscellanei, Mechanici, & Epistolæ*; with an *Appendix*, and an Account of the Manuscripts left to the University by the late famous Antiquary, Mr. *Anthony à Wood*; which are also laid up in the same *Ashmolean Musæum*.

Lastly, comes the Titles of those Manuscripts which the University bought of the same Mr. *à Wood*; and of those left to the Publick Library by Dr. *Fell* the late Lord Bishop of *Oxford*, and some others. These Manuscripts being between Eight and Nine Thousand in Number, make up the First Part of the First Tome, which is shut up with every Author's Name, or Tract, &c. in the foregoing Catalogues. The Library-Keepers have told me, that since this Catalogue was printed off, the University has bought all the Papers, Manuscripts, and Books collated with Manuscripts, &c. which were in the Library of the late learned Dr. *Edward Bernard*, and that some other Manuscripts have come in also, by the Generosity of late Benefactors.

Sir, In this Account of the Catalogue, I have purposely wav'd the describing of any particular Book; Because if I should enlarge upon some which might please me, and I might think curious; yet I should certainly run over many, as considerable in other Respects, which would be an Injury to them: And if I should take in all the eminent ones, this Letter would swell into a Volume, and would be rather a Catalogue than an Epistle. I am afraid, Sir, I have impos'd upon your Patience already, but to make some amends, I will be more brief as to the remaining parts.

The

The Second part of the First Tome, as I told you before, consists of the Manuscripts in most of the Libraries of the *Oxford* Colleges, in this Order :

|    |   |                  |
|----|---|------------------|
| 1  | <i>University-College</i> , in which are Manuscripts              | 165              |
| 2  | <i>Baliol-College</i>   | 319              |
| 3  | <i>Merton-College</i>   | 348              |
| 4  | <i>Exeter-College</i>   | 52               |
| 5  | <i>Oriel-College</i>  | 72               |
| 6  | <i>Queens-College</i>   | 40               |
| 7  | <i>New-College</i>  | 323              |
| 8  | <i>Lincoln-College</i>  | 113              |
| 9  | <i>All Souls-College</i>  | 50               |
| 10 | <i>Brasen-Nose-College</i>  | 16               |
| 11 | <i>Corpus Christi-College</i>                                     | 271              |
| 12 | <i>St. John's-College</i>   | 199              |
| 13 | <i>Trinity College</i>  | 82               |
| 14 | <i>Jesus-College</i>  | 105              |
| 15 | <i>Magdalen-College</i>   | 239              |
|    | Omitted in <i>Merton-College</i>                                  | 1                |
|    | Omitted in <i>Corpus Christi-College</i>                          | 7                |
|    | Given to <i>Queens-College</i> by Bishop <i>Barlow</i>            | 106              |
| 16 | <i>Magdalen-Hall</i>  | 12               |
| 17 | <i>Wadham College</i>   | 14               |
|    | Omitted in <i>University-College</i>                              | 14               |
|    | Omitted in <i>All Souls-College</i>                               | 16               |
|    |   | <hr/> 2564 <hr/> |
|    | Given lately to <i>Lincoln-College</i> , by Sir <i>G. Wheeler</i> | 76               |
|    |   | <hr/> 2640 <hr/> |

And these, Except the *Appendix*, have their own Index, like the First Part.

In the Third Part of the First Tome, we have as good an Account of the *Cambridge Manuscripts*, as could be gotten; that is, of the Manuscripts in

|    |  |     |                       |
|----|--|-----|-----------------------|
| 1  | <i>Emanuel-College</i> , in Number       | 137 | taken by Mr. Barnes.  |
| 2  | <i>Trinity-College</i>                   | 563 | Mr. Laughton.         |
| 3  | <i>Sidney-Sussex-College</i>             | 76  | Mr. Craven.           |
| 4  | <i>Gonville and Caius-College</i>        | 580 |                       |
| 5  | <i>Bennets or Corpus Christi-College</i> | 395 | Dr. James, A.D. 1600. |
| 6  | <i>Peter-house-College</i>               | 268 | Dr. James.            |
| 7  | <i>Pembroke-Hall</i>                     | 231 | Dr. James.            |
| 8  | <i>Jesus-College</i>                     | 7   | Dr. James.            |
| 9  | <i>King's-College</i>                    | 7   | Dr. James.            |
| 10 | <i>Trinity-Hall</i>                      | 7   | Dr. James.            |
| 11 | <i>The Publick Library</i>               | 322 |                       |
|    |  |     | <hr/>                 |
|    |  |     | 2293                  |
|    |  |     | <hr/>                 |

Which Catalogues, with their Index, make up the Third and last part of the first Tome.

The Second Tome, as I have said, comprehends the Libraries of Many of our *Cathedral Churches*, *Noblemen*, *Gentlemen*, &c. the chiefest of which I will reckon up, as they lye in the Catalogue.

The *Cathedral Churches* are those of *York*, *Durham*, *Carlisle*, *Worcester*, *Salisbury*, *Winchester*, *Lichfield*, *Hereford*, *Exeter*, *Wells* and *Canterbury*.

Other Libraries belonging to *Publick Places*, here described, are those of *Westminster-Church*, *Winchester-College*, *Coventre-School*, *Bristol*, *Grays-Inn*, *Eaton-College*

lege, *Gresham-College*, *Shrewsbury*, *Lincolns-Inn*, *Sion-College*, *Manchester-Library*, with Directions to the Manuscripts in the *Heralds Office*, and to the Records in the *Tower*.

The Manuscripts of the *Nobility*, are those of the *Earl of Carlile*, the *Earl of Denbigh*, the *Lord Viscount Longueville*, the *Earl of Peterborough*, the *Earl of Derby*, the *Lord Bishop of Norwich*, and the *Earl of Kent*.

The largest Catalogues of the *Gentry* are those of *Sir William Glynne*, *Dr. Plott*, *Sir Thomas Wagstaffe*, *Mr. Leneve*, *Dr. Francis Bernard*, *Mr. Evelyn*, *Mr. Seller*, *Sir John Hoby*, *Dr. Johnston*, *Mr. Bromley*, *Mr. Onsley*, *Mr. Chetwynd*, *Dr. Tyson*, *Dr. Browne*, *Sir Henry St. George*, *Dr. Gale*, *Mr. Thayer*, *Mr. Pepys*, *Mr. Worsley*, *Sir Edward Norwich*, *Sir Henry Langley*, *Mr. Jones*, *Dr. Todd*, *Dr. Edward Bernard*, which last are now all in the *Bodleian Library*, *Mr. Thoresby*, *Mr. Burscough*, *Mr. Brotherton*, *Dr. Sloane*, *Mr. Cousin*, *Sir George Wheeler*, which he has since generously given to *Lincoln-College*, *Mr. Farmer* and *Sir Symonds D'Ewes*. All which have appear'd Patrons to, and Encouragers of this Work, besides whom, and others of less Note, here is exhibited a Catalogue of the Manuscripts in his Majesty's Library at *St. James's*, which I ought to have mentioned in the first Place; and one Foreign Catalogue which is that of *Isaac Vossius*, whose Manuscripts are now at *Leyden* in *Holland*. The Books being good ones, and the Catalogue being hitherto, often enquir'd for, I am well satisfied to see it here, tho' the Books were suffered to go out of the Kingdom. This part likewise has its Index.

The last part of the Book, that is, the Second Part of the Second Tome, gives us the Catalogues of *Ireland*, viz. of the *Earl of Clarendon*, who, though he be an *English Peer*, yet the Books are *Irish*, and were brought from *Ireland*. The next is that of the *Countess of Dublin*,

then that of the Lord Archbishop of *Dublin*, with the Titles of those Oriental Manuscripts, which he lately bought out of the Library of *Jacobus Golius*, and lastly of Dr. *Madden*; which last Part, as all the rest, has its particular Index; and by this means, each part may be bound up by its self, and interleav'd.

I can't believe that any body will now deny, that the Books themselves (whereof these Catalogues give you the Titles) are extant in those Publick or Private Libraries to which you are referred: At least, when any Book here said to be in any Library in this University is desired, recourse is had to it immediately, and I doubt not but that the same fairness has gone through the whole. If this be granted that we have such Books in the Kingdom, as we pretend to have; I make no question but their Value will be easily allowed, since there is nothing required in a Book to enhance its Price, but what runs plentifully through this Collection.

Books (I mean Manuscripts) are usually valued and had in Estimation, either in regard of *their great Age, the Language they are written in, their Beauty, or for their Rarity*: Upon all which Accounts, I look upon our *English* Libraries, and consequently upon these Catalogues to be very considerable.

If *Antiquity* at any time prefers one Manuscript or one Copy of the same Author before another; there are several mentioned here, of as great Age, as those we meet with in Libraries abroad: And indeed I must always prefer the most *ancient and accurate* Copies of all *ancient* Authors, whether they be *Sacred or Profane*; and without the help of such, we should never have had a correct Text of many of them: and by their Assistance, many obscure Places are every Day, and will still be amended.

Nor is the *Language* wherein Manuscripts are written, less to be look'd upon ; I mean the *Original* in respect of *Translations*. 'Tis well known, that the *Greek Physitians, Mathematicians, Philosophers, &c.* which made up the greatest part of the Learning of the *middle* and the *following Ages*, were not studied in the *Original*, but only in a corrupt *Latin* Version of the *Arabic* used by the *Moors* in *Spain*, which *Arabick*, was translated from the *Greek* by the *Saracens*. So that receiving their Learning at the third Hand, 'tis no wonder they could not comprehend the true Sence and Meaning of their Authors. And how many Authors of great Note there are, as yet in print only in a vicious Translation, whose own Words, in their own Language, are still extant in our Libraries ; may be seen by perusing these Catalogues.

Some People have got a Notion that all Manuscripts are only a Company of old, rusty, Moth eaten Books, upon which a Man may pore his Eyes out before he can read a Word or a Line, &c. which I take to be a meer Cavil. 'Tis true, every body has not the Gift of writing an excellent, or even a tolerable good Hand ; nor are some of the Manuscripts written about Three Hundred Years ago, very easie to be read by one who is not us'd to them. But that this must affect all Manuscripts I see no Reason, since many which I have seen far exceed our modern writing ; nay, I have heard several of the best Pen-men in *London*, ingenuously confess that they could not write a Book near so well as some they have shewed me ; which yet, are by far exceeded by many that I have been shewed in the *Bodleian* Library. I could easily name to you several Books there, in *English, Latin, French, Greek, Hebrew, Arabick, Persian, Syriack, &c.* which are written almost to a Miracle, beyond any thing Printed, and beyond the Idea which any body can have of them, who has not yet seen such things.

Nor

Nor can I less admire the Magnificence of our Ancestors in other Matters relating to Books, besides the fair Writing of them. How many had they written from the beginning to the end in Letters of Silver, or letters of Gold, or both, cover'd over with Plates of Massy Silver, or Gold and Enammel, which are now either lost, or sacrilegiously torn from them? Notwithstanding which Barbarity, some remain to us still. Where do we see Books so richly painted and adorned now, as our Forefathers caus'd theirs to be done? The *Bodleian* Library-Keepers shewed me many ancient Books of this sort, finely designed and painted, by one of which it appear'd, that half the Book took up near Six Years time to illuminate it; which however, was inferior to another they shewed me, whose Workmanship upon a very moderate Computation, could cost little less than a Thousand Pounds Sterling. And this I take to be an Argument likewise, of their Love to Learning, since 'tis likely, that otherwise they would not have laid out such Sums of Money upon it: And who can tell, but that the Splendor and Magnificence of some of their Books, has alone preserv'd them from Destruction?

Lastly, the *Rarity* of Manuscripts, which make some more sought after than others; is when such a Book is the *αὐτόγραφον*, or the best, or the only Copy of such an Author, &c. or is written upon a curious or a desirable Subject. Of which sorts, many often occur in these Catalogues. That I may omit the vast Numbers of more recent Books, treating of our late Kings and Queens, their Policies and Intrigues, their Treaties and Negotiations, their Power and Force by Sea and Land; and the like of most other Countries. With the Genealogies and Histories of the Lives and Deaths of our most eminent Statesmen, Scholars, Soldiers, Lawyers, &c. the Heads  
of



of which are too many to be here reckon'd up; but are largely accounted for in the Catalogue.

One thing, indeed, is objected against this Work by some squeamish Persons, some of whom are Foreigners (who look upon our Store of Manuscripts with an ill Eye) and others are of our Country-men, who say, *That there be many Faults in this Book, and that divers of the Catalogues are erroneous in some, and not large and particular enough in other places.* Which very Objections, however, suppose that some Catalogues, if not the greatest part, are done well enough to give even themselves Satisfaction; As for the Foreigners, before they find Fault with this, it would be fit they should put out better Catalogues of their own Manuscripts: This Work, as faulty as it is, exceeding their Performances in this kind, as much in Accuracy, as in the Number of Books it represents. And if our Country-men will but take the Pains to consider it throughout, they will find (nor can Envy it self deny it) that many of these Catalogues are most judiciously and exactly taken; and all the rest so well done, as to deserve rather their Thanks than their Censure. If some of the Manuscripts contain here and there a Tract which is not mentioned; 'tis better so, than to put down the Titles of those Tracts, which are not now to be found in the Book: For this would be an Affront and Abuse upon the World; when as that may be remedied in another Edition. And the very Catalogues which they quarrel with, give us the Author's Name, and the Title of the Book if it be Anonymous, and for want of that, sufficient Notice of the Subject-Matter of it; which, one would think, might give Content to any Person of a candid and ingenuous Disposition: Especially considering the newness of the Design, the great Difficulty of procuring so many Catalogues as they are here presented with, and that Promise which is

made to the Publick, that all the Amendments that are made, shall be entred into an interleav'd Catalogue in the *Bodleian* Library, from whence they may correct their own. But by the way, it may not be much amiss to observe, that these very Men who rais'd the Objections against it, have been known to be eager in making use of it, when they wanted notice of Manuscripts, according to their several Occasions.

And as they have already found the Benefit of it in their way of Study, so several eminent Scholars have done, even before it was published: Whereof I will mention but Two, *viz.* the Reverend Dr. *Cave*, as may be seen in his Second part of his *Historia Literaria*, and Mr. *Grabe*, from whom we expect many (hitherto unprinted) Pieces of the *Primitive Fathers* to be quickly published from the Manuscripts, to which he was directed by these Catalogues alone. And this is one great thing, wherein these Catalogues may be serviceable to all Men of Letters, by admitting them to the latent Riches of the Nation, whereby they may be much better enabled to give us good Editions of Books than formerly. If any Author be to be re-printed, the Catalogues will be forthwith consulted, in order to know what Manuscript Copies there be of him amongst us, and where they are; that so they may be collated, and the most important *Readings* and other Remarks be, from them, made Publick. If any other Subject be to be treated of, next after seeing what there is in Print upon it already, recourse is had to the Catalogue, to see what there remains unprinted; the publishing of which is bestowing so much Learning upon the World which they had not before. Besides, by diligently reading over these Catalogues, we acquire a compleat Notion of the Writers of almost all Ages and Nations, and of their Works: the Catalogues of *Printed* Books giving only an Account of those

those Books already in *Print*, not mentioning those Manuscripts, which have been (as I may so say) hid and concealed from the World all this while, especially those in private Libraries.

Another Account upon which this Catalogue may be serviceable is, (for the Honour and Credit of *England* in general, and of our *University* in particular) to undeceive many Learned Persons beyond the Seas; some of whom have been too much prejudiced against us for our supposed Penury in this Kind, and others who had heard some uncertain Rumours of our Plenty of Manuscripts, have perhaps believed it to be true, but could never get any tolerable List of them. Dr. *James* was the first who published any Catalogue of our Manuscripts, which now makes but a small part of this Book, and yet the Foreigners, almost ever since, have went by that Catalogue: And all the great Accessions to our Publick Libraries have not been much taken notice of. *Isaac Casaubon* came hither to *Oxford* about the Year 1613. as appears by one of his *Epistles*, where talking about the *Bodleian* Library, *Noli* (saith he) *cogitare similem hic reperiri librorum manuscriptorum copiam atque est in Regia. Sunt sane & in Anglia manuscripti non pauci, sed nihil ad Regias opes.* But was that great Man now alive, he would, doubtless retract this Saying; since in this Particular, the *Bodleian* is certainly superior to the *French King's* Library, as it was in the Year 1640. if we may trust a Catalogue of it, which was made at that time, or *Labbæus* since, who seems to magnify it enough. And if any of the Foreign Catalogues contain the Titles of all the Manuscripts in their respective Libraries, this of ours is superior to them all: but if their Catalogues be taken by halves, 'tis their own fault.

The same Opinion of our *Publick Library*, many other Strangers have had besides *Casaubon*. And *Spizelius* in

his Collection of Catalogues of Manuscripts of the greatest Libraries in *Europe*, which he printed but Thirty Years ago ; when he comes to the *Oxford* Library, and tells you that he had learnt from *Hottinger* that we had received the great Additions of the *Baroccian* and *Archbishop Laud's* Manuscripts, goes on thus, *sed quorum designationem à me nondum visam, invito præterire debui silentio.* And *Hottinger* himself complains that he could not get the Catalogues of them, and was therefore forced to make mention of them only by *Hear-say*, The good-natur'd Gentleman took a deal of Pains in describing many other Books of *Mr. Selden*, *Mr. Greaves*, &c. as he could get notice of them, which are now for the most part, in our said Library. I could mention divers other Foreign Writers to you, but I suppose, I have tired you sufficiently already : I'm sure I am weary, and will therefore conclude this long Epistle with a Testimony of the same *Hottinger*; who being an Out-landish Man, may be esteem'd more unprejudiced in our behalf. It is in his *Bibliothecarius quadripartitus*, pag. 33. where, after he had (as well as he could) described some of our *Publick* and *Private* Libraries, that he closes his Discourse in this manner, *Quoniam vero tot Anglia Bibliothecis triumphat, tot Manuscriptis reliquas superat, tot Orientalium Monumentis abundat, adeoque subsidii rei litterariæ instructissima est; quia miremur, ex hac etiam Insula, tot eruditionis Philologicæ, & Theologiæ Practicæ cum primis hætenus prodiisse monumenta?* Which, in my poor Opinion, may, upon the coming forth of these Catalogues, be more fitly applied to the Nation, than ever before. I am,

S I R,

Tour, &c.